

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: FROM MONO-INFORMATION TO MULTIMEDIA-COMMUNICATION

The Information, Communication & Technology (ICT) sector is constantly evolving affecting people's lives in different ways. Nadine Thau & Ikenna Nwosu spoke to global telecoms experts from both business and technical backgrounds to understand where future opportunities lie and how the ICT industry contributes to society.

ICT transforming lives

Telecommunications is a force for good socially as well as commercially. The social aspect includes 'bringing the world together', most pertinently those that have been left behind by more traditional forms of communications. It is strongly believed telecommunications can support and integrate the developing world i.e. those who live rurally or remotely that have no or limited access to information which is more readily available to the rest of the world. In the absence of traditional classrooms, telecommunications can fill that void with an unrestricted access to information, and extended infrastructure in remote areas.

"The most important contribution telecommunications will make to society will be increasing access to education via the internet, access which will be available from anywhere – this will mean development for the country... schools can access the internet anytime. Also for the farmers, so they can negotiate prices for their products at international levels." (Telecoms Operator, Central America)

Driving positive change

The hope and capacity to make this ideal a reality is of course something for us all to strive for, it also shows the enormous potential for the industry itself to develop. Not only for those potential consumers who are cut-off, remote or even of the potential avenues with which operators can increase revenue, but also and most fittingly the potential of the technology itself, without which we cannot make the strides forward socially or economically. For all of this latent talent and opportunity to be realised the boundaries outside of the traditional ways of communicating will need to be pushed. And they are.

Multimedia content provision shapes future technology

The next technological step is constantly being explored and is one experts feel will unlock all other forms of potential, one that will



educate those that have been deprived the opportunity, and one that will offer significant competitive advantage to operators and therefore the financial rewards... Multimedia.

"Multimedia will bring in the notion of sharing: before we shared time over the phone today we are sharing information. Tomorrow, it will be leisure and entertainment, for example you will be able to see a football game from home and allow friends to view it from another location, or play chess and see your direct opponent who sits somewhere else" (Telecoms Operator, France)

We have witnessed the enthusiasm around the iphone and the dawn of 'apps', allowing us to tailor our communications to our own specific needs. It is universally recognised as an area which is constantly expanding and has an exciting journey ahead. ICT companies are determined to be at the heart of driving this evolution.

"The multimedia producer's role will be the leading one. The market demand for these services and the speed of their development is already big and constantly increasing." (Telecoms Operator, Kazakhstan)

The opportunities are endless although innovation takes time and requires high investment. But as business and people embrace new technology, developments will be even faster. There are more exciting things to come; we are only on the threshold.